

## 2 Distinctions and Definitions

### THE WPA IN THE INSTITUTION

Defining writing program administration should be easy, since it is that which writing program administrators (WPAs) do: define that administrative role in both institutional and intellectual terms and you have defined the work. But because writing programs are site-specific, they differ widely from one another, meaning that the work also differs widely from campus to campus. Consider these two job ads, modeled on ones that appeared recently:

1. Assistant Professor and Director of First-Year Writing: As Director of the first-year writing program, mentor and supervise adjunct composition faculty; supervise and train Writing Center tutors; offer composition/writing theory workshops for faculty; sponsor writing across the curriculum initiatives and other composition-related ventures. Teaching may include professional writing and history of the English language as well as writing courses. St. Clarence University is an independent Catholic institution in the liberal arts tradition, with 1,200 students and 70 faculty.
2. Advanced Assistant or Associate Professor and Writing Program Administrator, the University of Euphoric State: The WPA will be responsible for supervising adjuncts, lecturers, and graduate teaching assistants who teach freshman and junior writing; preparing TAs to teach; directing the composition program as appropriate to the university's mission; and providing leadership in curriculum development within the writing program. The WPA must be an active researcher of writing and knowledgeable in at least two of the following areas: writing in the disciplines, writing program administration, assessment, educational technol-

ogy and writing, technical writing, service learning, first-year experience. UES is a doctoral/research institution; the English Department has 30 full-time faculty and offers a BA, MA, and PhD in English as well as a graduate certificate in the teaching of writing.

These two ads illustrate a major feature of writing program administration: the fact that context is all. As Thomas Amorose notes in “WPA Work at the Small College or University,” the WPA at an institution of under 5,000 students might be part of a department of seven departmental faculty (in English, or perhaps in Humanities or Communication Arts), where all faculty teach writing and where the major part of the administrative side of the job is working with these faculty in collegial ways, helping design curricula for writing courses, working with the Chair on scheduling, and heading up any testing efforts for placement or writing competency. He or she would teach a number of different undergraduate courses, since the department is small and the curricular needs legion. As David Schwalm notes in “The Writing Program (Administrator) in Context: Where Am I, and Can I Still Behave Like a Faculty Member?,” such a job is a *task* rather than a *position*; it includes no particular standing in the administrative hierarchy and is often ill defined and open-ended. It is instead quasi-administrative, characterized by a lot of responsibility but no authority and no budget (9). The work of such a WPA is often counted in a performance review under the heading of “service,” even though it is much more complex than the committee work that falls under that rubric for other faculty. At a large research institution like the one advertising the second position, a WPA might be part of a department of 30 or more tenure-track faculty members, along with 20 or 30 adjuncts and as many TAs. Besides working out the curricula for the various writing courses, he or she would be in charge of TA training, of finding ways to integrate the adjuncts into the program without treating them like superannuated TAs, and of teaching graduate courses (often pedagogy courses for the TAs but sometimes also the methods courses for secondary education, courses in rhetoric, creative writing, technical writing, and literature). This person would also handle grade complaints; plagiarism issues; staffing, hiring, evaluating, and sometimes firing TAs and adjuncts; working with the administration and other institutions on articulation agreements; and planning or helping to plan the program’s budget. This sort of WPA is in effect the head of a

department within a department, and usually receives some released time from teaching in recognition of that fact. There is usually a place in the departmental organizational chart for this person (along with the associate chair and perhaps other positions); the person therefore has positional authority and a set of duties and expectations outlined in the bylaws. So although there are common administrative tasks and assignments among all WPA positions, the definition of a writing program administrator is very much site-specific, dependent on local history (e.g., how the program has been shaped by local exigencies such as state mandates for assessment) and the size and complexity of the institution. As Jeanne Gunner notes in “Decentering the WPA,” the position is often amorphous; definition is problematic and therefore a crucial problem (8). Without a clear definition of the work, WPAs sometimes find themselves in positions that others define for them in unrealistic ways.

Further, WPA work differs from other university administrative jobs in two important ways. First, WPAs—unlike most other administrators—are doing work (involving curriculum, assessment, placement, and staff development/TA training) that is directly linked to and informed by a growing body of research in their own scholarly field. When a dean asks whether or not students can’t just be placed in writing classes based on their SAT verbal scores, the WPA can, and should, respond with research on placement methods that demonstrates better ways of determining which students should be placed in which courses, including directed self-placement. When a department chair wants to increase the cap on writing class size, the WPA can produce the NCTE guidelines on class size, marshal the evidence on research on class size in higher education, and present the data on workload issues for teachers of composition (see Chapter 4). Unlike the situation even twenty years ago, there is now a solid research base for many of the administrative decisions with which the WPA is faced. Second, because the first-year writing course is usually the only course that all students in the institution are required to take, the WPA is in a unique institutional position, answerable not only to the department chair but also in effect to the entire university. Because faculty often have a reductive (“no surface errors”) and sometimes uniquely personal (“writes like me”) notion of what good student writing looks like, this can put the WPA in the position of being held accountable for the general state of student writing across campus.

The definition of the term “writing program” also differs from institution to institution. As Schwalm notes, “a collection of courses taught by various faculty according to their own lights and probably not desiring much direction” cannot be considered a program. He goes on to say:

A writing *program* minimally consists of one or more courses (usually first-year courses) with multiple sections of each, governed by a common set of objectives. They might also have a common course syllabus, some consistency in teaching methods, and common assessment and placement procedures. There are lots of add-ons and variations. As WPA, your portfolio might include additional courses, such as advanced composition, technical communication, or business writing. The responsibilities sometimes include basic writing, a writing center, and placement and assessment processes. You may be responsible for writing across the curriculum programs (WACs) as well [. . .]. There is no agreed-upon concept of “writing program.” There is no reason why there must be agreement, and again, no particular model is necessarily better than another [. . .]. (11)

Experienced WPA's have written about understanding the WPA's role within the institution. Schwalm divides the organization of almost all universities into three major administrative units: academic affairs, student affairs, and administrative affairs. Within academic affairs, most important to understand is the academic “chain of command” (a structure with some similarities to the management structures of late nineteenth-century corporations, since it developed in parallel with those structures). The chair of a department is the front-line manager, reporting to a dean (a middle manager); the academic dean reports to a central administrator, often a provost or academic vice president, whose job is to be the chief academic officer (CAO). This person is usually the most dominant figure on the academic side of the house, since he or she usually controls the flow of the budget (12–14). These positions are known as line positions; one usually rises through the faculty ranks to ever-higher levels of responsibility. Non-line administrative positions often include deans or vice provosts for graduate/

undergraduate studies and vice presidents/provosts for research, diversity, finances, student affairs, extended services, summer sessions, etc. Although many WPA positions differ from all these in that they are usually located within departmental structures, there are some similarities, in that the WPA is responsible for what is usually viewed as a program that serves the entire campus. A clear understanding of the administrative hierarchy is crucial for making that program work, but an understanding of who does what in the other parts of the university is also key. Schwalm notes that there is a simple rule to follow regardless of where the WPAs position lies in this hierarchy: "Make friends among the master sergeants. One friendly associate registrar is worth more than a roomful of deans when it comes to getting things done" (14).

#### THE WPA AS UNAPPRECIATED WIFE

Although WPAs are like other university administrators in some ways, they may be different from most of their administrative colleagues in terms of seniority. A line administrator in higher education is nearly always a tenured member of the faculty, usually a full professor, someone who has proven him/herself first as a member of the faculty. Although they do not always rise through the faculty ranks as do line administrators, most non-line administrators are likewise senior members of the community, people who have wide experience with university matters: because these managerial positions are leadership positions, seniority and experience are important for success. The WPA, however, may be taking on an administrative position as an untenured assistant professor (see the two job ads, above), a situation which has its dangers. Unless the letter of hire specifies exactly how WPA work counts as intellectual and scholarly work (as spelled out by the Council of Writing Program Administrators), tenure committees may count the work only as "service" and deny tenure as a result. The new WPA must be very mindful of this possibility.

The situation is complicated by the gendered nature of composition as a field. As we shall see in the next chapter, after a brief period at Harvard when highly respected members of academe were in charge, the teaching of composition became relegated to teaching assistants and contingent faculty. Many of the latter were women, in part because of the fact that academe was (up until the affirmative action

regulations of the 1970s) a decidedly male-dominated organization, and also because women who married and had families were not expected to work full-time, if they worked at all. Theresa Enos describes this gendering process in *Gender Roles and Faculty Lives in Rhetoric and Composition*. Summarizing the work of a number of scholars, she lists the factors that have helped to define composition as “women’s work”: it has a disproportionate number of women workers, it is service-oriented, and it pays less than “men’s work”<sup>1</sup> and is therefore devalued (4). Sue Ellen Holbrook (in “Women’s Work: The Feminizing of Composition”) demonstrates how the hierarchical nature of English studies made it easier for women to find jobs in the lower tier because of the belief of the male literature faculty that composition was “drudge work” and that teaching composition was just that (207). The director’s role, then, became that of “wife.” Charles Schuster, in an essay on the politics of promotion within English departments, enlarges on this definition: WPAs are “dutiful wives who do much of the dirty work: teaching writing, reading myriad student essays, training TAs and lecturers, administering testing programs. That is the primary function of the composition wives; to maintain the house and raise the children, in this case the thousands of undergraduates who enroll in composition classes” (88). Lynn Bloom caricatured this definition of writing program administration in an essay entitled “I Want a Writing Director,” a piece modeled on Judy Syfer’s “I Want a Wife” (a famous feminist skewering of gender roles that appeared in the preview edition of *Ms.* magazine<sup>2</sup> in December, 1971).

I want a Writing Director who will keep the writing program out of my hair. I want a Writing Director who will hire a cadre of part-time comp teachers to teach all the freshpersons. I want the Writing Director to be a woman and to hire primarily women because women are more nurturing, they are usually available on the campus where their husbands or other Significant Others teach, and besides, they will work for a lot lower salary than men and can get along without benefits. The money my school saves by hiring these part-timers can be applied toward my full-time salary [. . .] [I]f by chance she does not meet our department’s rigorous criteria for tenure—after all, we have our standards to maintain—I want the

liberty to replace the present Writing Director with another one. (176, 177)

Noting the genderized nature of the field, feminist scholars in composition have taken up the issue of power as part of the role of the WPA. Rebecca Moore Howard critiques the portrait of the agnostic, individualistic WPA outlined by Edward White (in "Use It or Lose It"), advocating instead an approach that refuses a "militaristic" spirit in favor of "collective methods for effecting change . . . that will transgress the discourse of hierarchical competition" (40), and Marcia Dickson proposes a feminist definition of writing program administration that seeks collaboration and joint problem-solving rather than power brokering. Hildy Miller, in "Postmasculinist Directions in Writing Program Administration," summarizes the discussions of feminist administration, asking what she terms basic questions: "First of all, what does 'feminist directing' look like in actual practice? Secondly, in what ways does a delivery system informed by feminist ideology clash with the masculinist administrative structures in which it is embedded? And, finally, how can two such seemingly incompatible systems be made to mesh into a 'postmasculinist' approach?" (50). With a caveat that the terms she is using are risky (in that they smack of essentialism), she defines feminist administration as cooperative, participatory, egalitarian, integrating the cognitive and the affective, the personal and the professional. Miller points out that, although this approach is effective in some instances (reaching out to an angry parent to express shared concern about a student who is failing), feminist approaches are likely to be misinterpreted as weakness from a masculinist point of view. Miller argues for a definition of writing program administration as both feminist and masculinist.

As a matter of practicality, the two must merge. After all, masculinist assumptions about power, leadership, and administration permeate the academy, affecting feminist approaches at every turn. Merging the two requires a WPA to take a bi-epistemological stance. As a marginalized group, women have historically learned to function in two worlds. Compositionists who apply feminist principles in the classroom do the same. Thus it is not surprising that WPAs would also need to employ these strategies [. . .]. The postmas-

culinist, then, is not just a matter of replacing masculinist with feminist, but rather of somehow doing both or creating a space for one to exist within the other. (58)

### THE WPA AS SCHOLAR

In the 1980s there was an abundance of anecdotal evidence that young WPAs were being denied tenure as a result of their departments not understanding or caring about the nature of their administrative work (see Chapter 4). In part to combat the definition of WPA as unappreciated and therefore disposable wife, the Council of Writing Program Administrators developed a set of guidelines for the work entitled "The Portland Resolution: Guidelines for Writing Program Administrator Positions."<sup>3</sup> The first of these guidelines, developing clear job descriptions, is then presented in some detail, outlining the preparation a WPA should have in terms of knowledge and experience and the responsibilities of the job (including the scholarship of administration; faculty development and other teaching; writing program development; writing assessment; writing program assessment; and accountability, registration and scheduling, office management, counseling and advising, and articulation). The document was meant to be helpful to departments advertising for WPA positions and to WPAs searching for ways to define what they did in ways that their colleagues could understand.

The Executive Committee of Council of Writing Program Administrators also developed a related document to expand on the second guideline mentioned, that of establishing clear criteria for assessing the work of a WPA, determining how administrative work should be evaluated for tenure and promotion. A draft of this second document appeared in the Fall/Winter 1996 volume of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, appearing in final form in 1998 as a position statement, "Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Program Administration."<sup>4</sup> The Preamble to the position statement is worth quoting at length.

It is clear within departments of English that research and teaching are generally regarded as intellectual, professional activities worthy of tenure and



promotion. But administration—including leadership of first-year writing courses, WAC programs, writing centers, and the many other manifestations of writing administration—has for the most part been treated as a management activity that does not produce new knowledge and that neither requires nor demonstrates scholarly expertise and disciplinary knowledge. While there are certainly arguments to be made for academic administration, in general, as intellectual work, that is not our aim here. Instead, our concern is to present a framework by which writing administration can be seen as scholarly work and therefore subject to the same kinds of evaluation as other forms of disciplinary production such as books, articles, and reviews. More significantly, by refiguring writing administration as scholarly and intellectual work, we argue that it is worthy of tenure and promotion when it advances and enacts disciplinary knowledge within the field of Rhetoric and Composition. (Council 85)

The Position Statement presents several case studies, and then, following Christine Hult's lead in her essay "The Scholarship of Administration," invokes Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, to define writing program administration in one of Boyer's categories: the Scholarship of Application. The authors note that Boyer does not argue that all service should be lumped into this category. "To be considered scholarship, scholarship activities must be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity. Such service is serious, demanding work, requiring the rigor—and the accountability—traditionally associated with research activities" (Boyer 22). To be considered scholarship, the Position Statement concludes, writing program administration must meet two tests. It first needs to advance knowledge—knowledge production, clarification, connection, reinterpretation, or application. Second, it should result in products or activities that others can evaluate; the statement quotes a list of qualities from an essay entitled *The Disciplines Speak* which "seem to characterize that work that most disciplines would consider 'scholarly' or 'professional'":

- the activity requires a high level of discipline-related expertise.
- the activity is [. . .] innovative.
- the activity can be replicated or elaborated.
- the work and its results can be documented.
- the work and its results can be peer-reviewed.
- the activity has significance or impact. (Diamond and Adam 14)

The Position Statement lists five categories of intellectual work that can be figured into a definition of writing program administration as the scholarship of application: program creation, curricular design, faculty development, program assessment, and program-related textual production (not just conference papers or articles in refereed journals but also innovative syllabi, funding proposals, statements of philosophy for the curriculum, resources for staff training, etc.), and offers guidelines for evaluating this work.

In an article that was intended as a supplement to this document (“The WPA as Pragmatist: Recasting ‘Service’ as ‘Human Science’”), Donald Bushman offers another way of classifying the intellectual work of a WPA by viewing it through the lens of pragmatist philosophy, two principle elements of which are reflection and action (31).

Bushman summarizes pragmatist theories from John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, key figures in the educational reform movement of the early twentieth century, pointing out that Dewey scorned the traditional hierarchy view of “knowing” (purely mental activity) as superior to “doing.” Bushman argues that the WPA as pragmatist is both a doer and a knower. Pointing to Louise Weatherbee Phelps’s definition of composition as a human science, Bushman states: “when we see our jobs [. . .] through the lens of Phelps’s characterization of composition instruction—as a complex, ‘experimental’ activity—we see composition and the job of a WPA as an intellectual undertaking that is concerned with action and reflection; we see it as praxis” (40). Two books edited by Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser, *The Writing Program Administrator as Theorist* and *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher*, have deepened the discussion of writing program administration as scholarship. *Theorist* is made up of essays that focus on theorizing various issues of programs and administration, includ-

ing leadership theories, ethical issues, writing across the curriculum, collaborative research, and assessment. *Researcher* contains essays that focus on approaches to research that provide feedback loops into the writing program as well as ways of turning the administrative work into published scholarship. The essays discuss feminist methodology as it relates to WPA inquiry, historical research as applied to local programs (especially archival research), research using surveys and outcomes assessment, and assessment of teacher preparation programs.

#### THE WPA AS POLITICIAN, RHETOR, CHANGE AGENT, MANAGER

As Doug Hesse points out in “Politics and the WPA,” WPAs are both politicians and rhetors. Kenneth Bruffee (in an interview quoted in Amy Heckathorn’s dissertation) emphasizes these two roles, discussing the uniqueness of the WPA job as a subversive activity conducted by people able to make changes that are important because they themselves are not that visible.

It’s a low level job that has aspects to it that no other low level academic job has. It’s not like a department chair, for example [ . . . ]. WPAs are right out there because they are talking to those chairs and trying to get them to do something they don’t want to do [ . . . ], You are constantly working the system in a way that’s really very exciting. It’s hard to think of a comparable occupation. I suppose it must be a little bit like at some level being a legislator must be[ . . . ]. It’s really politicking of a genuinely republican sense [ . . . ]. [A]s a WPA you function and get a lot of the same kinds of kicks you would get as a Provost—being able to deal at large with the whole university, not just the department—because what you are doing is understood by the university to be somehow relevant to practically every part of it. Much of the level is low enough—you’re a submarine—you can do the same things you could only get to do if you were running the whole show. (158–60)

Susan McLeod also discusses the subversive nature of the WPA in “The Foreigner: WAC Directors as Agents of Change.” Although the

focus is specifically on WAC directors, the discussion is relevant to the role of all WPAs in representing their program to outside constituencies, especially administrators or faculty from other departments on campus who express concern about student writing. McLeod discusses various roles that WPAs are often cast in by virtue of the language used by administrators to describe their university-wide role (e.g., the conqueror, the diplomat, the missionary), proposing that WPAs should invent a new role for themselves, that of change agent, working to change curricula and pedagogy to line up with what we know about learning theory.

Like it or not, WPAs are also managers: they function within an administrative structure, most often an English department, reporting to a line administrator such as a chair or a department head. Although they are also faculty members and as such focus on the needs of students, they must as WPAs act in the interests of the program and the institution. This managerial role has been critiqued at some length by various members of the profession. James Sledd, in a scathing essay that began as an address to the 1990 Conference of Writing Program Administrators, defined writing program administrators as “boss compositionists,” overseers of poorly paid contingent faculty and TAs, complicit in the English department indifference to the exploitation of these groups and in upholding the dominance of literary studies. He describes what he saw then as the prevalent solution to the fraught relationship between literature and composition:

to keep composition in departments devoted primarily to literature, to placate the boss compositionists by admitting them to the worshipful company of privileged researchers, but still to assign the actual teaching of writing to the contingent workers and teaching assistants. With that solution the compositionists are apparently content, since it marks the literary establishment’s acceptance of their claims to share the glory. (275)

Donna Strickland has examined the history of composition programs through the lens of management science, showing how many of the practices that administrators now must deal with (like a heavy reliance on part-time labor) are a result of nineteenth century “scientific” managerial theories and practices. The managerial role of WPA

has also been defined and critiqued from a Marxist perspective by Marc Bousquet (“Composition as a Management Science”); he sees the WPA as a low-level administrator, a “non-commissioned officer” whose task is “to creatively theorize and enact procedures to the disadvantage of other workers” (498). Citing an essay by James Porter and his colleagues that calls for composition specialists to be managerial insiders working to bring about change in universities, he states that “education management and its rhetoric of the past thirty years . . . has created the institution we need to change” (494). He offers instead “a labor theory of agency and a rhetoric of solidarity” (494), ridding universities of WPAs and practicing “social-movement unionism” (517. Bousquet continued his critique in a co-edited volume entitled *Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers: Writing Instruction in the Managed University*.)

Faculty and TA unions have in fact begun to spring up across the country, but administrative roles show no signs of disappearing as a result. Unionization has, however, called into question the definition of all university administrators: are they labor (because they are also faculty) or are they management? In “Doin’ the Managerial Exclusion: What WPAs Might Need to Know about Collective Bargaining,” Rita Malenczyk reviews how courts and labor boards have defined university administration in general with this caveat: “If those of us who are union members (as well as those who are not) do not know where and why the law has historically placed people who do what we do, then we may be unpleasantly surprised when we find our jobs—and ourselves—defined by a discourse we had no idea we were part of” (23). Malenczyk reviews a key 1980 Supreme Court decision, *National Labor Relations Board v. Yeshiva University* (known in collective bargaining circles simply as *Yeshiva*). The issue at hand was whether or not Yeshiva faculty had the right to unionize; the NLRB had ruled they could, but the university’s stance was that faculty were excluded under the National Labor Relations Act of 1935. That act, which governs private schools, distinguishes among employees, professional employees, and supervisors (managers): the first two can unionize, since they are presumed to act in their own interests, but the latter—who are presumed to act in the interest of the employer—cannot. Yeshiva University argued successfully that all faculty were managerial employees, since they have significant influence over university policy, thereby effectively barring all faculty at private institutions from

unionizing. The Supreme Court's decision was 5–4, however, and Malencyk points out that the dissenting minority objected to this definition, pointing out that education has become “big business,” a process that has eroded the faculty's role in decision-making. In other court decisions the differing interpretations of managerial roles have persisted—for example, chairs of departments at Boston University were found not to be subject to the “managerial exclusion” in a 1978 case, a different conclusion than the one that had been reached in a 1976 case involving the University of Vermont. Malencyk concludes: “Any time a faculty at a state college or university unionizes, the state labor board decides upon composition of the union, and makes its decisions in part by looking at the duties of the faculty on a particular campus. Such faculty might be writing program directors or writing center directors as well as department chairs, and they are subject to a variety of state and local laws which differ tremendously from one another as well as from (in some cases) the NLRA [National Labor Relations Act]” (29). In spite of the fact that the university may define all administrators (including WPAs) as managers, the legal definition of administrative positions can vary enormously, depending on state and local laws, in terms of whether they are labor or management.

### THE WPA AS LEADER

Irene Ward discusses the role of WPA as leader as well as manager, emphasizing the leadership aspect as the process of establishing the vision of the program, while the managerial aspect involves implementing the vision. Ward points to recent theories in leadership that shift the emphasis on a single influential person to “productive interpersonal relationships that empower all to succeed. The new leaders are not merely charismatic; they don't enforce a personal vision to which others must adhere or leave. They are vehicles of empowerment and agency in those whom *they serve*” (63). Ward quotes the research on power in social situations, concluding that the sources of power for WPAs are “expert power”—the fact that they have the knowledge to get things done, and “referent power”—derived from what sort of persons they are, their *ethos*, as observed in how they treat others. Ward points out that these new definitions of leadership for the information age will resonate with WPAs, since they involve such buzzwords as re-

spect, understanding, appreciation, and interconnectedness, and speak of leadership as teaching and learning (64).

Barbara L. Cambridge and Ben W. McClelland make a related argument in “From Icon to Partner: Repositioning the Writing Program Administrator.” They refer to Helen Astin and Carol Leland’s *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*, a book that posits two kinds of leaders, positional and nonpositional. A positional leader is one who provides leadership within an organization as a result of his or her position in the organizational structure, while a nonpositional leader is one who produces knowledge (for example, as a scholar). “The position of WPA demands that one be both a positional and nonpositional leader, existing in a wide network of administrators, scholars, teachers students, and other publics who expect excellence in both kinds of leadership” (Cambridge and McClelland 153). Because of the complexity of this sort of leadership (and also to ensure that WPAs do not wind up being the one person on a campus charged with everything having to do with student writing), Cambridge and McClelland make suggestions about how to spread the power and authority on a sort of Federalist model. One way to do this is, they suggest, to follow John Gardner’s advice, and manage interconnectedness. Gardner lists five skills that are needed for such management:

1. agreement building, including skills in conflict resolution, mediation, compromise, and coalition building;
2. networking, building the linkages to get things done;
3. exercising nonjurisdictional power, relying not on position but on the power of ideas, the power that belongs to those who understand systems;
4. institution building, including building systems that institutionalize problem solving; and
5. flexibility, including the willingness to redefine one’s role at any time. (119)

This brings us back to the issue raised at the beginning of this chapter: that in spite of the commonalities in terms of the intellectual work involved, writing program administrators’ actual positions vary greatly, with the result that there is no single definition of “writing program administration” or “writing program administrator.” In an online conversation about writing up job descriptions for WPAs, David Schwalm

argued that the task of definition should be individual: “WPAs should define their jobs, set goals in each area (research, teaching, service, administration), and identify measures of success.” Given the variety of exigencies and contexts within which writing program administrators work, the most workable definition of writing program administration is one written (and rewritten) for the job at hand.